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NEWS

Select Board grills MBTA over Winchester Center station delays

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

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Rendering of the $50 million Winchester Center Station reconstruction, featuring new high-level platforms, elevators and covered ramps. Completion has been delayed until June 2025. COURTESY PHOTO/MBTA

Winchester Select Board members sharply criticized MBTA offici
Monday night over continued delays and disruptions from the $5

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Winchester Center station reconstruction project.

Completion, which was scheduled for the end of December 2024, has now been pushed to June 2025, more than two years behind schedule.

During their update to the board on Dec. 16, MBTA representatives faced intense questioning about missed deadlines and community impacts.

“We’ve come in here over and over again and promised that this was going to get done and never been delivered,” said Select Board member Bill McGonigle, addressing MBTA Senior Project Manager Nathan Rae. “I don’t know how much I can personally trust your word, but now you’re telling me it’s not going to be done ‘till June.”

The MBTA’s Nathan Rae, left, and Lonny Fidalgo were questioned by the Winchester Select Board over the numerous Winchester Center station project delays. WINCHESTER NEWS/WINCAM PHOTO

Select Board Chair Michelle Prior confronted MBTA officials about their lack of compensation for community disruptions.

“When utilities tear up streets for years and use our parks for lay space, there are payments,” Prior said. “You’ve never offered us a nickel —

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that's parking meter revenue, it's parking permit revenue, it's daily parking revenue, and it's disruptions to our business, disruptions to our traffic."

Rae defended the project's complexity while acknowledging the delays. He cited labor shortages and competing rail projects, including work at West Medford station, as contributing factors.

"It's a difficult station to build," Rae said. "We can only build it from one side. We can't build it from anywhere else. We need Laraway Road in order to build the station. We can't build it from the tracks. It's way 20 feet up and 25 feet up in the air."

The project's challenges intensified when the MBTA lost the ability to "single track" through the construction site in March, forcing workers to clear the tracks each time a train passes.

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Rae explained this reduced productivity and contributed to delays.

During a subsequent discussion about outdoor dining later in the meeting, local business owner Artie Bennos described the construction's ongoing impact on downtown merchants.

"Not a day goes by that somebody doesn't come into me and say, 'Boy, I was trying to get here last week, but couldn't find a place to park, I went elsewhere,'" said Bennos, who has operated in Winchester for 47 years.

During the MBTA presentation, board member Michael Bettencourt proposed linking future construction easement extensions to

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improvements in the Aberjona parking lot, which has deteriorated during construction.

“If our goal is to deliver the best project possible from the MBTA perspective and the town’s perspective and increase ridership, that’s what you want,” Bettencourt said.

The board ultimately approved only a short-term extension of construction easements through Jan. 14, rather than the requested June timeline.

Town Manager Beth Rudolph noted during the discussion that parking lot repaving was originally included in project plans but “was subsequently dropped by the T without the town’s knowledge.”

Once completed, the station will feature new high-level platforms, three elevators and covered ramps and stairs to improve accessibility. A partial opening in October restored limited service, with the station currently serving about 150 daily riders, down from pre-COVID levels of 400-500 passengers.

The MBTA project is returning some parking areas by May 2025, with full station opening targeted for June 2025. Additional “punch list” work will continue into 2026.

During the exchange with MBTA officials, board member Anthea Brady requested more frequent schedule updates, noting, “Bad news doesn’t get better the longer it lingers.”

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Celebrate Women's History Month with Girls Leading Change

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

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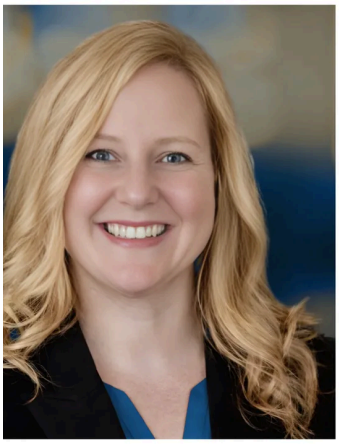

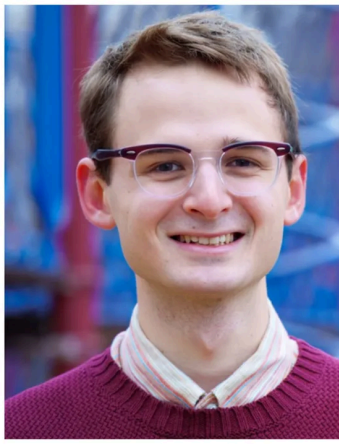

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‘Chicago: Teen Edition’ dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents “Chicago: Teen Edition,” a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

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Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents ‘Syldason: You Are Welcome Here’

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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